

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE PATIENTS FIRST ACT



WHAT IS BILL 41? Also known as the **Patients First Act**, Bill 41 makes extensive changes to Ontario's health care policies with the aim of ensuring and improving access to primary health care. The controversial law introduces administrative **sub-regions** and increases government management of health care planning, funding, and delivery.

Late 2013

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care forms the **Expert Advisory Committee** on Strengthening Primary Health Care in Ontario.



May 2015

The Expert Advisory Committee releases the **Price-Baker Report** which recommends restructuring primary health care into



Patient Care Groups, now termed as "sub-regions".

June 2016



The Ontario government introduces **Bill 210**, the **Patients First Act**, as a response to the Price-Baker Report, though the bill is terminated when Legislature is prorogued in the summer.

Oct 2016

The **Patients First Act** is reintroduced in the Legislature as **Bill 41**.



Dec 2016

Bill 41 passes its third reading in the legislature 53-42 supported by the Ontario Liberals and opposed by the Provincial PCs and NDP. The bill received Royal Assent on December 8, becoming law.



TIMELINE

KEY CHANGES TO ONTARIO'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Introduction of geographic sub-regions.



Sub-regions co-ordinate health care delivery and funding in a geographic area. These **sub-regions** will be created and managed by the existing 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). Patients are assigned to a sub-region like students are assigned to a school district. Physicians may be contracted by these **sub-regions**, including those who practice within family health teams (FHTs) and community health centres (CHCs).

Rationale:

- all patients will be assigned to a sub-region and family doctor (currently 96% of Ontarians have access)
- the government will have more control over health planning
- local connections between health care professionals will be improved

Concerns:

- funding and care decisions will be made by government employees, who may lack health care experience
- Sub-regions add a layer of bureaucracy, increasing paperwork, time, and costs
- LHINs can bypass the OMA to control funding and resource agreements of physicians in primary care

Greater government oversight.



Bill 41 seeks to enhance accountability through the LHINs to ensure that patients have timely access to quality care. LHINs will have the authority to investigate and supervise health service providers.

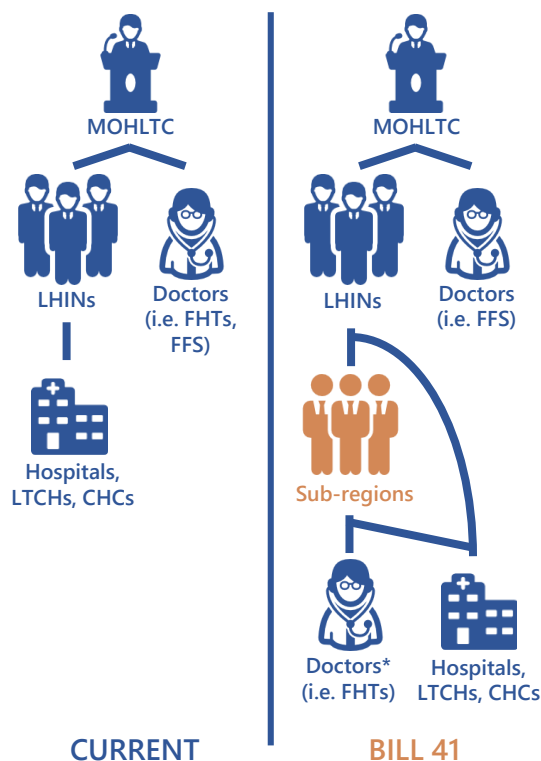
Rationale:

- LHINs have an expanded mandate to ensure patient access to care in order to be accountable

Concerns:

- the Minister of Health will be able to overrule local health care decisions
- government investigators will have access to confidential patient records

OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (SIMPLIFIED)



CURRENT

BILL 41

* includes primary care doctors contracted by sub-regions; MOHLTC: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; LHIN: local health integration network; Sub-region: also known as "patient care group"; "sub-LHINs"; FHT: family health team; FFS: fee-for-service; LTCH: long-term care home; CHC: community health centre; OMA: Ontario Medical Association

WHAT NOW?

Bill 41 comes at a time of high tensions between the provincial government and its doctors. The OMA has stated that the Bill was not "created in collaboration with doctors - our expertise and knowledge was ignored." Now law, various physician groups have continued advocating against Bill 41 while some physicians have refused to join ongoing LHIN consultations regarding Bill 41 implementation. The OMA is now fighting Bill 87, the *Protecting Patients Act*, which would further increase government access to patient information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact OPAC at representation@omsa.ca or visit www.omsa.ca/opac.

Sources and further reading

Patients First Act: www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=4215
 Patients First Act FAQ: www.health.gov.on.ca/en/news/bulletin/2016/hb_20161207_faq.aspx
 OMA Summary on Bill 41**: www.oma.org/wp-content/uploads/private/bill41summary.pdf
 OMA Analysis of Bill 41**: members.oma.org/Benefits/pmcphyresources/Documents/Bill41TOP5.pdf
 Price-Baker Report: www.oma.org/wp-content/uploads/primary_care_price_report.pdf
 Price-Baker Report article: healthydebate.ca/2015/11/topic/baker-price-primary-care-report
 Coalition of Ontario Doctors: coalitionofontariodoctors.ca/stopbill41/

** an OMA account is required for access

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